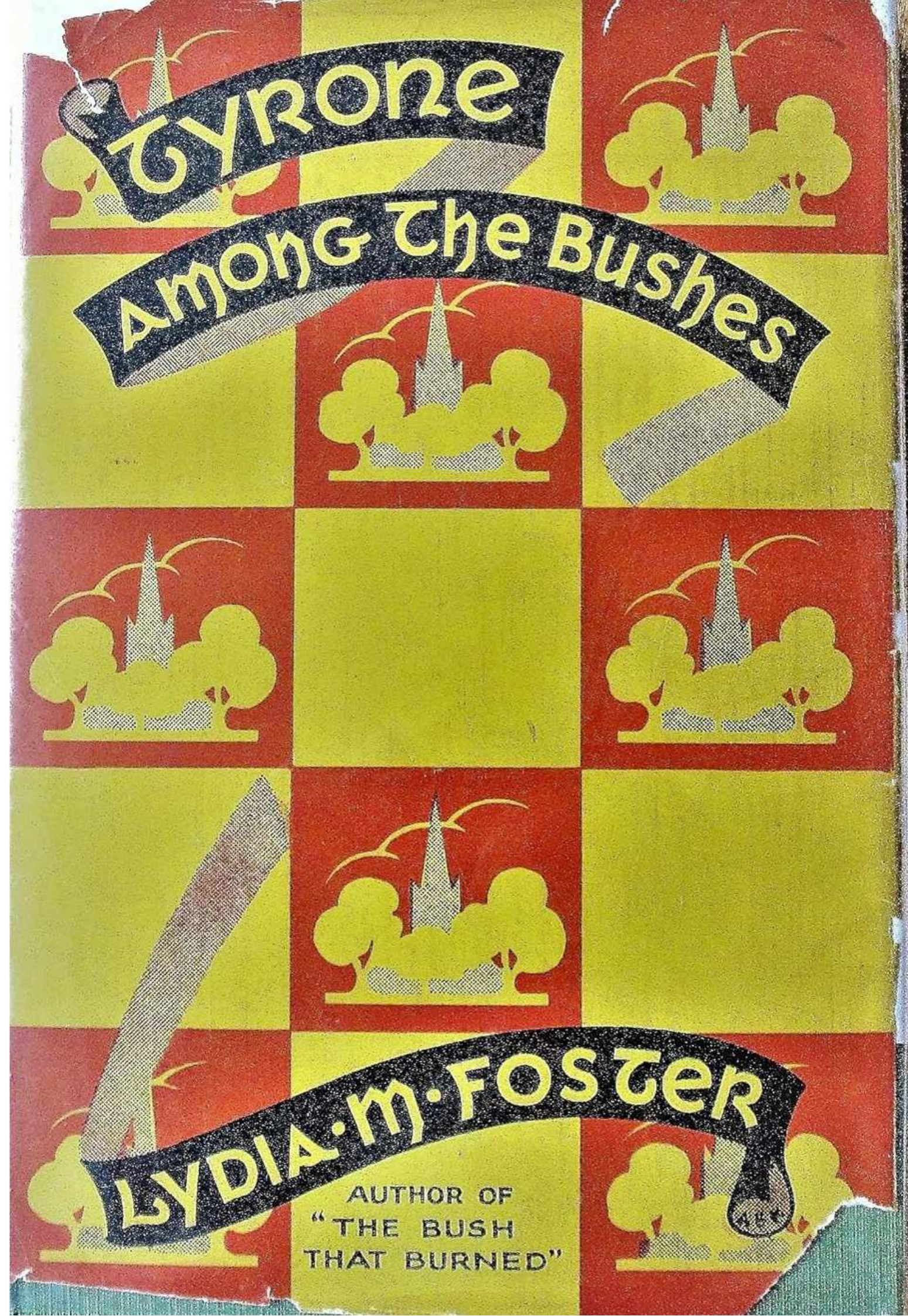
Tyrone Among The Bushes



LYDIA·M·FOSTER

AUTHOR OF
"THE BUSH
THAT BURNED"

TYRONE AMONG THE BUSHES.

TYRONE AMONG THE BUSHES

By

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"THE BUSH THAT BURNED"

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"You'd be bid time o' day from
every half-door."

OVER BEYANT
IN THE COUNTY TYRONE.

Over beyant in the County Tyrone,
It's seldom or never you'd walk far your lone,
For some dacent body from market or fair
Would give you a lift—and away you would tear
Through Killycolpaugher
And Ballyanticlougher,
Round the shores of Lough Neagh into
Gortinaglone.

You'd pass churches and chapels and meetin's
galore,
You'd be bid time o' day from every half-door ;
'Deed a sate you would get if 'twas only the "well,"
And the powerful romances thon driver would tell ;
He'd be twisting his neck
To keep you in crack,
And the owl mare smilin' with her ears laid back.

If you went on a visit to the County Tyrone,
You're expected to eat all but your plate and your
bone ;
While the darlin' fresh buttermilk flows over your mug
And as fast as you drink it's filled up from the jug ;
Thon buttermilk bubbles
Might drown a man's troubles,
'Tis the guileless champagne of the County Tyrone.

Shortly after you're asked tc sit down to your tay,
Sweet and strong—three cups—you just be to obey,
While sweemin' in butter lies the grand pirta-flitther.
And an egg in an egg-cup fernenst every sitter ;
When they know that you're stayin'
The hens keep on layin',
And the black kettles sing in the County Tyrone.

I hear tell of grand cities, such as Paris and Rome,
With their forums and boulevards and the Place de Vendome ;
Beyant in Tyrone for their towers I'll not sigh,
But admire my own turf-stack that points to the sky :
There's three things hard to match—
Your own door on the latch,
Your own wee pratie patch,
And a ladder in winter to keep down the snug thatch.

"It's quare and heartsome to talk to a
body about their burial."

A STORM IN A TEA-POT.

At one end of a white deal table, scoured to perfection, Ellen Fulton prepared for tea. Ellen prided herself upon her refinement, and for herself she placed a cup and saucer. Her husband Henry, even after twelve years' tutelage in matters ceremonial, faithfully administered by his wife, still owed a decided preference for a bowl of generous girth. He averred that a second cup being necessary and the second cup being notoriously inferior to the first, he acted wisely in securing that the full measure should be of equal merit. So Ellen laid the bowl on the table in the resigned way that she adopted towards her husband's many such-like shortcomings, and, having placed the tea-pot on some red cinders on the hob to "draw," raised a whistle that hung behind the kitchen door to her lips, and summoned Henry to his tea.

Harrowing his oats two fields away, Henry raised his head at the sound, and saw the familiar tall trim figure on the doorstep. There she stood beguiled by the damp beauty of the late April afternoon. Beyond the "street," so orderly in its arrangements, lay her "flower-knots," gay with red cowslips and yellow daffodils, bordered by London Pride, while the sweet rain-washed air carried to her the homely scent of flowering currant bushes.

In all these dear home-like sights and sounds Ellen usually took unfeigned pleasure. This afternoon, however, they failed to chase away an air of preoccupation that sat darkly on her high unwrinkled brow.

As her husband approached she turned indoors and poured out the tea.

Henry pulled a chair across the tiles and placed it near the table, for he liked to sit sideways with his legs crossed at meals. Placing his hat on top of his knee he at once fell to with hearty good will. Conversation at such an absorbing function he never dreamt of. Therefore, when Ellen's voice faintly broke the silence, it at once caused him to stop short in his vigorous chewing of a huge mouthful of soda bread.

" I wouldn't have believed it," murmured Ellen, as if in soliloquy,

It suddenly dawned on Henry that something was troubling her, but it did not often occur to him to speculate on what it might be. Ellen was his wife. She had brought him a dowry of fifty pounds. A clean shirt lay ready to his hands every Sabbath morning. A clean collar was also provided against Sabbath days and funerals. If she did keep his house "comfortless clean," and if he did jib a little at what he considered small inconveniences, in his secret heart—if he ever thought of the matter—he really admired her. He was well aware, also, that for her ceaseless activities in the domestic kingdom, she was "praised in the gates."

Once more the silence was broken.

" I wouldn't have believed it of Matty."

" What's that you're saying about Matty?"

" I'm just sayin' that Matty's keepin' the tea-pot from me that belongs to me by rights," said Ellen with asperity.

"Why, but you ask her for it?" demanded Henry, who was of a direct nature in all his dealings.

Ellen's sharp chin rose an inch in the air.

"I think I see me demeanin' myself to ask for what's my own," she said haughtily.

"Och, well now, shure a taypot's neither here nor there," said Henry in a conciliatory tone. "Why, haven't you one already?"

"One! Three if it goes to that. But right's right, and your mother always said I was to get that tea-pot when she was gone. You can't deny that you heard her yourself sayin' it," challenged Ellen.

"Aw, I disremember trifles like that," declared Henry.

"'Deed it's more nor trifles you disremember," said his wife scornfully. "Just take a look behind your back at that floor where you disremembered to clean your feet!"

Henry did not "take a look behind his back," but continued his onslaught on the soda-bread, for Ellen's soda-bread was perfect. Then what seemed to him a brilliant and suitable retort for once occurred to him. He made it with his mouth full.

"Why, woman—dear," he said gaily, "you spend all your life fightin' with clabber and you'll be buried in clabber at the last."

Ellen solemnly put down her cup on her saucer and her saucer on her plate. This indicated that she was finished. The suggestion she intended to convey was that appetite had succumbed to a sudden and overwhelming check. It was several seconds before she could find her voice.

" It's quare and heartsome to talk to a body about their burial," said she in polite clear tones, "and them sittin' at their tea."

But Henry, as ever, was insensitive to such delicate manifestations of temperament. He had also finished his tea, but with the usual elaborate gusto. Revolving his bowl in mid-air, so that every particle of sugary sediment might be collected, he flung back his head, and the bowl obliterated most of his countenance for a time after which operation he smacked his lips loudly, by way of giving thanks, clapped his hat down on his head, and was half-way to the door when Ellen suddenly recovered from the gloom into which his sepulchral joke had thrown her.

" Maybe you disremember, too, that the Rev. Mr. M'Ilhagga is visitin' in the townland, and will be here for tea the morra evenin'," she said.

" Av course I would mind a thing like that," asserted Henry.

" Well," continued Ellen, " I asked me cousin from Americky to come too, thinkin' it would be the one trouble to have them both."

"Ay, I suppose so," said Henry unconcernedly.

" Well, wouldn't it be the spite if I hadn't your mother's nice tea-pot for him."

Henry, with his hand on his latch, turned round.

" If it's your cousin, Bob Grimes, that you're so particular about, I'm thinking less might do him. Why, I mind him well afore he left the counthry, and I give you me word that I wouldn't have hired him in a hirin' fair, no, not to drive cows out of a kail-yard."

"Aw, but these Americky people," contended Ellen, "sees nothing but grandeur, and I wouldn't like to affront him, not having things genteel. If you would just hear how fine he talks now—why you'll not know a word he says."

"Well, indeed, I'm not carin' a dale whether I do or not, for half of it will be lies, anyway."

And Henry shut the door quickly behind him. Experience had taught him that a hasty exit alone secured for him the last word.

Ellen brooded over her grievance, as she washed up the bowl, the spoons, the cup and saucer, and arranged them in time-honoured precision on the dresser. Pressed against the door was a congregation of fowls clamouring for the supper now due. Ellen mixed meal and potatoes carefully in an old pan kept for the purpose and carried it out, they following in a body,to the remote corner of the farm-yard, which she considered the right and proper place for them to gobble it up.

From this point she looked down on the old Fulton homestead, where Henry was born and his fathers and grandfather before him. It was now his brother Robert's home. There was an absence about it of the prim air that sat on her little own trimly-kept place, but borne upwards to her on the still air came the music of children's voices. That long low thatched cottage down among the old trees in the hollow bore the very impress of motherliness. It was so snug, so homely, so comporting looking. She saw Matty, her sister-in-law, come out, with her large market basket over her arm. She was evidently going shopping, now that tea was

over and the "throng" of the day past. Ellen's eyes followed the dumpy little figure as it turned out of the " loanen," and into the road and up the hill out of sight.

And standing there among her hens temptation seized her.

Maggie, eldest and wisest of Robert and Matty's goodly flock, sat rocking the stout wooden cradle that was an heirloom in the Fulton family. Outside, the five hopefuls which separated the rocker from the rocked, tore fast and furious round the house and in and out among the trees, with accompanying yells of childish abandonment. As Maggie peered through the hole in the jambwall, the cradle's reckless course was suddenly checked.

" Is that you, Aunt Ellen?" she greeted the visitor pleasantly.

" It is," said Ellen drily.

" Me ma's away to Ballyboe for the goods."

" Is she?" said Ellen, looking frigidly over Maggie's fuzzy red hair to where, on the dresser's furtherest height, stood the dust-encased object of her adventure.

" Won't you take a sate?" said Maggie politely.

" I'm not for sittin' at present," said Ellen, " I just thought I would come down for the tea-pot that your grannie left me, but what your ma's keepin' from me."

Whereupon she seized a chair, and, before Maggie's astonished eyes, mounted and carefully descended, blowing disdainfully at the grey coating on the tea-pot —a matter with which all her life she had been at feud.

" Me ma would have washed it for you," said Maggie, somewhat perplexed.

"Oh, well, I'll not trouble her," said Ellen with dignity, turning to go.

"Are you goin' without takin' a look at wee Joseph?" said Maggie, surprised. "It's a wheen of days now since you seen him. Just try his weight now."

And even in her hardened mood Ellen could not resist Maggie's prideful plea.

Entranced at his escape from the cradle's boredom, wee Joseph spun his fat shapeless legs around wildly, and tried to put out Ellen's eye with his chubby fists, all the time uttering strange gurgles, supposed to express his pleasure at this fortunate meeting. And under the clutch of those tiny fingers Ellen felt the dark spirit that possessed her slinking away. But she resisted the promptings of her better nature and thrust the unconscious peace-maker again on Maggie.

"I see," she said, "he's thrivin' tarrible well, but I'm in a bit of a hurry and must be movin'."

She succeeded in escaping a meeting with the revellers outside, and stole away—already ashamed.

Once more Ellen laid her tea-table. On this occasion, however, it was laid in "the room" and was decked with the white and gold china kept in a corner cupboard there. Cake purchased at the village shop held the place of honour. Her own delicious soda fare she deemed not refined enough to place before the minister and the American gentleman. All preparations were accomplished early in the day, and at their own twelve o'clock dinner, Henry was subjected to a minute coaching in select tea-table manners.

"And whatever else you do," Ellen exclaimed in earnest conclusion, "don't saucer your tea."

" But if it bees too hot ?" objected Henry.

" What's to hinder you to wait till it cools ?" inquired Ellen coldly, and rose to indicate that the conversation was at an end. It certainly was, for Henry's brain could conceive of no worthy answer to that query.

Mr. Grimes, "the American gentleman," arrived in time to participate in the "worship" that formed an indispensable part of the pastoral visitation. First came the reading of a chapter. That concluded, Ellen placed her best cushion on the floor for the minister to kneel upon as he prayed. On her own knees, with eyes devoutly closed, her thoughts hovered over the approaching meal. " I wonder if the kettle's boiling. . . I'll wet four good spoonfuls . . . meybe five . . . it's better to be on the strong side. . . ."

"Amen," said the minister.

The kettle was doing its duty, and the renowned tea-pot stood in waiting on the kitchen table. Even the cat on the hearth sat blinking at this new wonder of pink and gold. Henry alone knew nothing of its advent.

Then at the zenith of Ellen's pride of possession calamity came unforeseen and unexpected. Carefully, having first warmed it gently, did she fill her tea-pot to the brim, and proceed to carry it in secret triumph to the "room" where the admiring eyes of the minister and Mr. Grimes would no doubt follow it to the table. A cinder from the fire lit sportively on pussy's tail, causing her to fly in heedless panic right across Ellen's

path. Disaster ensued, resulting in a heap of china fragments in a scalding bath on Ellen's spotless tiles!

Immediately the door of the "room" opened and Henry's head and shoulders appeared.

"I say," he shouted, "did you break anything?"

With considerable force Ellen pushed him back, shut the door decisively, and for the next five minutes worked at high pressure. Filled up the kettle, mopped up the floor, and threw with scorn, to an unnamed grave amongst the ashes, the fragments of her fallen idol. Then from the mantelshelf she almost lovingly lifted the homely old Britannia metal tea-pot that had so narrowly escaped enforced retirement. Save for a round red spot on each cheek-bone she was as calmly dignified as was her wont, by the time she joined her guests and invited them to "please sit forrad to the table."

The minister "asked a blessing", and, that over, the American gentleman assumed the lead of the conversation.

"Over in Amuricka," he announced, indicating, by the jerk of his thumb over his left shoulder, the lie of that Continent, "we milk the cows by electricity."

At this interesting information Ellen bowed her head politely, as though to imply that she really considered that to be the correct way of milking. Although not apparently looking at her husband, she plainly saw Henry wink at the minister. Then the travelled cousin continued to relate marvels, all of which he had himself witnessed, while Henry spun his spoon round and round in his cup, gave a great gulp, and licked his lips loudly.

* * * * * * *

The old minister of Drunchin sat in the little parlour purposely left to himself on Saturday evenings, for in those days country manses did not boast a "study."

To-morrow would be the May Sacrament. Yet it was of a long past May Sacrament that he was thinking —his first in Ballyboe. Between to-night and then what had lain? A ceaseless round of visiting, teaching, comforting, counselling. A life lived simply and humbly. The priceless reward of knowing it had not been all in vain. To-night a very persistent intuition that he was near the end of it all dominated his mind. It gave him a marvellously happy feeling.

The opening and closing of the door brought him back at once to duty, and he groped on the mantelpiece for his spectacles and peered through the dusk in an effort to discover who his visitor might be.

"Why—Mrs. Fulton—Matty," he said, placing her in the old hair-cloth covered armchair from which he had risen. It was the only one the little room contained.

She did not speak.

"You're all well, I hope," he said, seeking for the cause of this unusually-timed visit.

"Yes," she said at last, "we're all bravely, barrin' a stitch that grips me whiles atween the heart and the stomach. But I don't count it dangerous," she added.

"It will probably pass away," said the minister.

Then a silence fell while Matty loosed her bonnet strings and wiped her face with her handkerchief.

"There's a touch of heat in the air this evenin'," she remarked.

The minister glanced at his necessary fire.

" I'm glad to hear it," he said hopefully. Then a more pronounced silence.

" You're bravely yourself, sir?" queried she.

"As well as I can expect at my age," said the minister with a smile.

" Dear, you're far from old yet," she demurred politely.

" Well, I baptised you, any way, Matty."

" You did that, sir, and married me, too, but oh! Mr. McIlhagga, dear, I'm not doin' right lately," and she burst into tears.

The confession came as a shock to the minister, but still he waited ; for forty years of patient listening stood to his credit.

When Matty had eased herself by a little crying, she commenced to state her case.

" It's all over Ellen, sir," she began, "and many's the time I've been put to it before to stand her, but when she charged me with stealin'——"

" Surely you are mistaken," interrupted the minister gently.

" Well, then, the next thing to it," said Matty defiantly, "and all over an old chaney tay-pot. Ay, an old tay-pot I suppose a hundred years old," she said scornfully. " It belonged to Robert's mother," she went on to explain, "and she promised Ellen that it would come to her when she was gone. For Ellen, you might know, sir, is all for grandeur, and for havin' ministers to tea, and settin' them on that grand sofy she made Henry buy."

The minister here could scarcely forbear a smile, as he recollected his enforced seat of honour since its advent.

"And what did I want with the old tay-pot ?" demanded Matty indignantly. "Shure I would have been glad to get it out of the road. But there it was, sittin' on the top of the dresser, and it went clean out of me head. But she would have had it dacently the very next week, for Robert was going to whitewash the kitchen and I would have come on it, and that would have minded me. But what does Ellen do ?" demanded Matty dramatically, "but down she comes of an evenin' when there was nobody in the house but the poor witless childer, and takes a chair, and up she climbs and reaches for it, and down she comes and away with it. Was it *it* she had the tay in when you were there the other evenin' ? A low-sized tay-pot, all pink flowers with goold hearts over it ?"

"I'm afraid I never noticed anybody's tea-pot in my life," admitted the minister.

"'Deed, I'm sartain shure of that," said Matty. "It's not tay-pots *your* head's full of."

Matty's outburst spent itself. Her wounded feelings were healing even now by the recital. Her tender heart asserted itself, and her voice strangely softened.

"But, sir, dear," she said pathetically, "it's the ill-will in meself that's killin' me. That's what I can't thole no way. For at this minit me heart is hot against Ellen, and God knows I owe her too many kindnesses for that. Nobody knows what Ellen was to me when the childer all lay ill in the fever and none of the neighbours would

come near the house because it was that smittle, an' wee Robbie went. Oh, Mr. McIlhagga, dear, but she stayed with me night and day! And many's another time forby that she stood by me. Oh, sir, dear, you want to be in trouble to know what Ellen is! And I wouldn't that this had happened, no, not for all I have," said poor Matty hopelessly.

The unburdening of Matty's soul to the patient, sympathetic old minister had eased her wonderfully, and she now braced herself to declare the real reason of her Saturday evening visit. So she dried her eyes and straightened herself up.

"But the reason I come troublin' you about it, sir, was to see what I'm to do about the Sacrament the morra. Shure, I dursent offer to come forrad with such wickedness in me heart, now could I? Oh, Mr. McIlhagga, dear, tell me what I be to do."

Matty's round distressed face was pathetic in its appeal.

The old minister had never shirked a duty, and he did not hesitate now.

"I think I know what you should do, Matty," he said gently. "It will maybe be hard for you, but it will be right. Go straight to-night to Ellen and ask her forgiveness."

"But it was her was in the wrong," urged Matty.

"Even so. That makes it the easier for you."

"What'll I say, sir?"

"Just tell her what you have told me."

Matty sat very quiet for a minute or two, and then rose to go.

" I'll do it, sir," she said, " I don't feel near so bitther as when I come in. Oh, Mr. McIlhagga, dear, what would wees do wantin' you?"

* * * * * * *

Straight past her own "loanen" and up to Ellen's walked Matty. Then on the hill-top she lingered, waiting to see Henry go out to fodder his cattle for the night. At last her opportunity came.

Ellen, her long back bent over her broom, was sweeping her kitchen floor for the last time that day. The wonder was that she did not rise in the night watches to perform that office. A soft touch on the arm from which the sleeve was rolled high caused her to start and straighten herself. Then, when she saw who was the interrupter, she clung for support to her heather besom.

" Ellen," began Matty, "I just come to say that if I have done you any wrong, I didn't mean it, and I'm heart sorry. Illwill in me heart towards any one is what I can't thole at all, and least of all towards you. God knows I owe you too much for that. I can't go forrad the morra without asking your forgiveness."

" You've no call to ask my forgiveness," Ellen jerked out at last, when she recovered from the shock of Matty's appearance. " 'Twas me that was in the fault."

The words fell with pain on tender Matty's ears.

" No, no," she said hastily, "we were both in fault, but it's all over and done with now, isn't it, Ellen? And I'll go happy now to the Lord's table the morra."

" I wasn't goin' forrad the morra either—no, I wasn't fit to go. It would have been the first Sacrament I missed since I was married, and Henry got me a token on the fast day."

" But you'll come now, Ellen?"

" I will that."

Here an attack on the outer wall heralded Henry's entrance, as he kicked first one toe and then heel in an effort to dislodge any forbidden matter.

That relations between the powers had been strained of late he and Robert affected not to be aware of. Nevertheless it was with some difficulty that he smothered an exclamation of astonishment at seeing Ellen and Matty sitting side by side and substituted instead—

" Good evenin', Matty, it's shapin' for rain, I think."

"Ay, Henry, the wind has a sough like it," she replied.

" You're hanging the lantern on the wrong nail," said Ellen.

"Aw, what odds," said Henry. Nevertheless he shifted it an inch further along the wall, and took up a customary attitude of his—half-sitting, half-standing against the dresser.

" Do yez stand in need of any kebbidge-plants?" he said, addressing Matty. " I was dibblin' them in the day an' I have a lot over."

" 'Deed we'd be right glad of them," replied Matty. "they're quare an' tasty of a Sabbath day boiled along of a bit of bacon."

"Ay, and washed down with a sup of fresh butter-milk," added Henry. " Gimme bacon an' greens and I wouldn't ask for beef. Besides, it's easier chawed."

Matty rose quickly from her chair.

" Dear oh," she exclaimed, "if that's not the clock warnin' fur nine an' the morra Sacrament Sunday!

Well, you'll call for me in good time in the mornin', Ellen?"

" 'Deed I will," said Ellen. " Nobody ever saw me late for meetin', but always there in time to read a chapter before the minister goes up the pulpit stairs. That's the way I was reared."

" Oh, ay, your father was an elder," said Matty.

" No, my mother's father was an elder, but my father wasn't an elder he was only a good man."

"An' the people were a dale better in the oul' times nor they are now," said Matty, "more's the pity. Good-night, Henry. Good-night, Ellen."

Next morning Matty was putting the finishing touches to her toilet in her bedroom off the kitchen when a frightened-looking Maggie ran in.

" Here's my Aunt Ellen," she announced in an awe-struck whisper.

" I'll be ready in a minit, Ellen," shouted Matty as well as she could with a pin in her mouth. " I'm just tying my veil."

She emerged beaming, her cheeks almost eclipsing the roses above them.

" What do you think of my bonnet?"

" Is it a new one?"

" Not at all, only a new flower and a wee goin' over." She turned her head sideways for Ellen's inspection. " I always concait that nothin' becomes me better nor a red rosey to the one side. My halfpenny now in my glove, and my umbrella and we'll start."

As they passed the bush of southern wood growing beside the door, Matty plucked two sprigs, one for her own and one for Ellen's Bible.

"A bit of sitherwood revives you if the meetin'-house is hot," she said.

When they came out of the "loanen" and on to the road Ellen was still surveying the glorified bonnet.

" I be to get my bonnet overhauled, too, don't you think for the summer?" she said, "but I'm ill to suit, I'm that pale and black-avised. Mebbe you'd come with me to Williamstown whatever day I go to see about it."

" To be sure I will, an' welcome," said Matty heartily.

" For," continued Ellen, "as for Henry being of any use for the likes of that!" Here she lifted her hands to signify that her command of speech was totally unable to describe the extent of his incapacity. " What do you think? Only last week I put on my weddin' dress to go to my niece's christenin', and as we were goin' along the road I was in swithers as to how it looked, so I asked Henry what he thought of it. At that he turns and looks at me. " It becomes ye quare an' well," sez he, "is it a new one? I never seen it afore." I can tell you I was fair mad with him. " You'll be tellin' me next you never were married," said I. And even then but he didn't take it up. " I'll be dotin' when I say that," sez he. " 'Deed you're that long ago," I said to him."

" Och, the men's all the same," said Matty, "they haven't the wit to know." Then her soft heart smote her, as she looked at the two plodding figures in the

distance before them, with backs bent from a lifetime of unceasing work. "But you an' me, Ellen, has no right to complain," she said, "we don't get many hard words."

"Ay, 'deed, they're brave sober men," conceded Ellen.

"They are that an' more," said Matty, "for there's them that neither drinks nor smokes and you couldn't live with them."

They were now at the church gates and the two meek objects of their criticism were awaiting them.

"Well, yez are enjoyin' yourselves talkin' anyway," said Henry.

"Ay, an' it's about dress," said Matty—"an' we goin' to meetin'!"

"Yez were a dale better at that nor ridiculin' the neighbours," said Robert. "Here's your token, Matty."

They passed through the gate and Matty crossed the green, followed by Ellen, to a corner where there was a small mound beside which they stood a little while, as was their invariable custom since wee Robbie "went."

In the square old meeting-house, with its bare seats, they reverently took their places, Robert and Matty so distributing their olive branches that youthful spirits would be kept in check by intercepting eye. In the seat immediately behind sat Ellen and Henry. To those whose fathers had worshipped inside these plain walls, the very dust was clear.

The Old Hundredth quavered forth, the elderly folk dragging well behind to show that God's praise was not

irreverently hurried in their young days. When it ceased the congregation rose and stood for prayer, turning their backs on the pulpit.

"Gather in our thoughts," prayed the old minister, "from off the hills and mountains of vanity, and fix them alone upon Thee."

And Matty's tender conscience smote her as she thought guiltily of the red rose in her bonnet.

In the seat behind, Ellen stood with head bent low, for shame that she had fallen so far in the Great Endeavour. And whilst the minister besought "untold blessings for the furthest islands of the sea" she added a petition of her own:

"God bless Matty!" she prayed fervently.

THE ULSTER MEETING-HOUSE.

Oh! for Kildarragh Meeting-House,
Where I sat when a lad!
When sight and sound, and wind are gone
I'll mind the smell it had;
And when the golden gates I win,
I think the heavenly air
Will have that sacred fust that laid
The backs of Bibles bare.

Its windows were just windows plain,
For lettin' in the light,
And at whiles we looked out through them,
And thanked the Lord for sight
To see His birds, and clouds, and trees—
Surely God's works surpass
Paintings of graven images
On variegated glass.

In God's house on Kildarragh hill,
I think I see the man—
Dared rise up in ITS pulpit and
Say 'hymn' in place of 'psalm';
He'd turn to stone ere our four walls
Would hold a human lilt;
We had our faults—but we were free
From such vainglorious guilt.

Our minister—I left him last—
For I may hold my tongue,
A man content that most his pay
Was hearts that round him clung.
His kesther hat, his white cravat,
His doctrine—'all were soun',
And when he touched upon the Pope,
He'd tear his pulpit gown !

" Matt ' walked ' with all the pride
of his order."

HIS GLORIOUS TWELFTH.

I'M workin' at the Major's the day afther the twelfth, but I wouldn't work on the twelfth, not if ye were to give me a poun' an hour," declared Matt Noble to the minister, as he clipped the neat hedge that separated the manse garden from the open road.

Matt had a pretty taste in the same art, and the hedge that bordered the "loanen" to his own little white house was considered one of the sights of the neighbourhood. Prehistoric animals of the bird family—phaysans Matt called them, probably from their magnificent tail appendage—perched on it at regular intervals, while interspersed among the "phaysans" stood prickly arm-chairs, presumably in case the birds grew tired of their ceaseless vigil.

For some unaccountable reason, the minister declined to allow Matt to essay his artistic genius on the manse hedges. "He likes everything as plain as his religion," Matt thought. For Matt was himself an Episcopalian. That is, he was baptised in that communion, and attended the parish church regularly once a year—"the twelfth" Sunday.

He explained to the minister, who often urged him to attend his place of worship, that such a course of action, agreeable as it no doubt would be, was for him impossible.

"I nivver enther that church door but what I catch the heavy coul'," he said.

While Matt thus dilated on his susceptibility to contract colds inside consecrated walls, he was wielding his hedge-shears gaily through the long day's rain, clad in what he called his "sleeved-weskit," with shirt flung open, Byron-like at the neck.

" Is the Major home from France yet ?" enquired the minister.

" Oh, aye, he's home safe this time ; but he has a dale of call to lave his own counthry an' spen' his money among a pack of Catholics.

At intervals in Matt's conversation he was wont to look up and down and round him suspiciously.

" Them Catholics," he would whisper, "ye can nivver tell when they're listening' ; ye couldn't breathe a word for them."

" If yer riv'rince 'll just stan' out a minute or two in the rain—but it's the gran' warm rain—I'd just like to acquent ye with the revinge what Barney Murtagh tuk on me. An' all just for traitin' him as I would a good Prodestan'. Him an' me that thick, borrowin' and lendin', an' as I say, me making no differ. An' him that fair to me face (but that's the sort of them yer riv'rince).

" Ye have heerd tell of me orange lilies, the brag of the whole countryside. King William himself, with all his gran' gar'ners, hadn't betther. Well they were batin' themselves the year, an' the boys depends on me for the arch at Johnston's corner. But wan mornin' when I goes out to take a luk at them, the eyes nearly drops out of me head, for I sees Barney Murtagh's hens

tearin' them up, an' makin' a scatterment of them like Kristens (its 'in the very hens, yer riv'rince).

" So I up with a stone an' kills wan dead in the very act, an' with that up comes Barney, an' if I didn't han'le me tongue at him, till he begins at me."

" You be to give me compensashun for that hen," says he ; "for that craythe r," sez he, "would think less," sez he, "of layin' a couple of eggs of a mornin'," sez he, "nor you would think of atin them," sez he.

" Take yer oul' skellyton home," sez I, "an' bury her dacent," sez I, "for there's not as much on her bones," sez I, "as would make soup for a sick bum-bee," sez I.

" So I s'ore I'd have the law of him, an' he so're he'd have the law of me ; an' we had the law of other, an' their worships dismissed us both (for they're puttin' the very Romans on the Binch, yer riv'rince.")

The minister had stood out through the rain with a purpose, so he seized an opportunity between Matt's declamations. It was also with a telepathic inkling of what was coming that Matt had absorbed the conversation as long as possible.

" I want you to promise, Matt, that you'll not touch strong drink to-morrow, but keep yourself a sober man, as you have done since the last twelfth."

" Och, sure the man's not livin', yer riv'rince, that could walk five mile an' the dust of so many feet in his mouth, an' not wet his throat sometime."

" Take a bottle of milk in your pocket," suggested the minister.

"Och, me cow's dry at prisint," retorted Matt, drawing down his long upper lip, in an attempt to conceal his amusement at his own drollness.

"Good evenin', yer riv'rince, an' may ye live to see many's the twelfth."

The next day Matt "walked" with all the pride of his order. It was the one day of the year for him. The glorious twelfth. As he passed Barney Murtagh tethering his goat by the roadside he actually felt a passing qualm of pity for the outcast, succeeded by a permanent thrill of joy that he himself was one of the elect.

He felt it good to be alive as, with sash across his breast, and orange lily in his hat, and a Sweet William in his button-hole he marched to the field, while the drums made a joyful thunder on his skull, and the shrill flutes pierced his charmed ears.

Not Ascot, with its Royal front, flanked by the beauty and fashion of the land, could have dazzled Matt's imagination more than "the field," where from the flag-draped platform poured forth the oratory that his soul loved. There with wild enthusiasm he renewed the vows of his youth.

On the return march he could not classify his sensations with accuracy, and he had adopted a peculiar marching step.

As he neared home the little side gate at the manse swung to and fro in the summer evening wind. Matt halted awestruck. After a few moments' meditation, he passed through.

The minister, summoned from his sermon, hastened to the door to encounter Matt's grave countenance.

"Mebbe ye dunno that yer wee green gate's goin' crackin'—crackin'—crackin'—"

There was no reply.

"I allow it's a warnin' to ye, yer riv'rince—a warnin' shure."

The door closed.

Once on the road again, this grave event was surmounted by a lyrical gaiety that took possession of him as he sang:

"In the County Tyrone, near the town of Dungannon,
Where many's a ruction meself had a han' in,
Bob Williamson worked, a waver by trade,
An' all of us thought him a stout Orange blade."

The song went on to relate how they were deceived in this belief, for Bob married a Catholic, and actually "walked" in their processions. His flute, however, came out of the business covered with glory, for no matter what Patrick's Day tune Bob started, it gave forth the "Protestant Boys."

When Matt arrived at the near-cut across the fields that led to his home, he did not recognise it, although he used it for well-nigh half a century, till a brother reminded him of it, by pitching him over the stile.

This did not seem to Matt anything out of the ordinary way of surmounting a stile, so, well pleased, at his progress, he began as soon as he could get on his feet again—

"Holy wather, more holy wather."

His prayer was instantly granted, as a result of one foot making a wide circuit beside his own flaxhole.

The water was dirty but not deep, and a large white duck sailed its surface. It was very dusk, and Matt cleverly apprehended this object to be none other than King William's famous white horse.

"Houl on," he shouted ecstatically, "till I cross the Boyne on yer back."

The sensible duck surveyed her silly owner scornfully, and went home, leaving him in possession of the "Boyne."

Matt floundered up and down until he satisfied himself there was no exit. Then he sat down contentedly, while his vocal chords, impervious to the damp surroundings, bellowed forth—

"An' many's the man lay on the groun' that day,
By cannon that did rattle."

There are other forces that can "lay a man on the groun'," but Matt did not make this reflection at the time.

Fancying himself in his own bed at home, he next prepared for sleep.

"It be to be a black frost the night," he said, clawing the water in the belief that he was drawing the blankets more closely around him.

Along the "pad" came Barney Murtagh, and seeing a human head above the waters of the flaxhole, he rushed at it, and had Matt on the bank before he was wide awake enough to drag his rescuer in.

With enormous difficulty, as Barney afterwards said, he "got him oxther-cogged home!" Matt maintaining with dignity all the way, "There's not a hate wrong wi' me." There he delivered him up into Sally's not too merciful hands.

As Matt sat at a fashionably late breakfast next morning (the Major would look in vain for him that day), any little appetite he had receding under the lash of Sally's skilful tongue, the latch lifted, and he, hailing any respite, looked eagerly for the incomer.

Barny Murtagh entered, holding out a discoloured wisp.

"Here's some of yer trappin's ye left behind ye in the wather last night," he said.

"It's yer sosh, ye drunken gomeril," announced Sally. "Can't ye up an' thank the dacent man that saved you an' yer sosh from bin drownded in yer own flaxhole. A purty tellin' that wud ha' been for the neighbours."

Matt rose and received the damaged tinsel and dimmed gold with humility. "Here's me hand', Barney," said he, "you an' me's friens again. 'I nivver bleeved what ye set yer hens on me lilies. Come out bye an' take yer pick for the fine one I killed on ye."

. . . . . .

That evening Matt called at the manse for the purpose of taking the pledge. The minister followed him to the doorstep with many kind directions as to the future.

"All right, yer riv'rince," he said, "all right; but don't be lettin' on to them Catholics."

THE IRISH MOTHER.

This wee thatched house was once a hive,
All swarmin' in and out on me ;
The neighbours praised me how they'd thrive,
Himself would frolic with the five,
That with the tumult I'd conthrive,
A quiet hour I'd plan and strive
For thinkin'—thinkin'—thinkin'.

Himself is gone. Four took the hills,
But Patsy sthrove to stay with me ;
My baby Patsy—God in heaven !
Pulse of my heart—to death was driven,
His little sins may be unshriven—
And one more heart like Mary's riven,
With thinkin'—thinkin'—thinkin'.

The thoughts of me ! they bate control,
They come to bed at nights with me ;
Like midges on a summer's day,
They thravel with me all the way.
May God forgive me when I pray
To get the cure that's shure to lay
The thinkin'—thinkin'—thinkin' !

COBBLER, STICK TO THY LAST.

Corney Boyle was an Ulster cobbler to whom romance came late in life. Unwilling to "stick to his last," he went in for cattle-dealing. But this story is concerned with his wooing and wedding of the Widow Conolly. Happiness was followed by disillusionment which gave new point to the old adage. The character drawing, the dialect, the atmosphere—all are true to the life of the Ulster countryside.

WHEN Corney Boyle had turned fifty the spirit of adventure that had been so long suppressed within his bosom burst forth. The monotony of the cobbler's bench weighed down his soul, and he craved for life with a capital L, as he conceived it to be found in cattle-dealing.

At first he merely dallied with the enticing pleasure, but gradually he was drawn into the vortex of never-ceasing fairs, and the trade that had enabled him to support his mother and sister in comfort was eventually relinquished for the more fascinating if more precarious profession of "cow-jobber."

Now Corney had never heard the famous aphorism that warns the cobbler to stick to his last, nor for that matter had his old mother Shusannah either. Yet taking this for a text she ceaselessly dinned it into his unwilling ears with all the bearings and applications in her own pointed picturesque diction.

But Corney never "answered back" or discussed the subject hotly or coolly with her. He simply let her

talk, and then followed his own inclinations in a fine scorn of consequence. Was it not from Shusannah he had inherited his chief qualification for that line of business, namely, "the gift of the gab?" Though she had never had occasion to display her talent save in leading the conversation round the cobbler's fireside, where impatient owners of footgear under Corney's lingering care found if not their boots at least plenty of "good crack." Also they fancied that their property had a better claim to his attention by their presence, though perfectly aware that his devotion cooled as the door closed on their exit.

THE MAN OF EDUCATION.

The Manse close by was a sure source of revenue to Corney, and some mirth was caused there periodically by the presentation of some such legend scrawled on a dirty leaf torn from a "pass book" and addressed to "his riverence" :—

miss margit held	6d.
miss harryit a nu sole	9d.
master Joney patched up	6d.
Tokeps on master wily	4d.
miss alis held and sold	1/6d.
protectors fir the mistress	2d.
corney boyle.	

Small wonder that Corney's education was considered above the average in his set; so that he was frequently employed to write "Mericky letters" for those who had not had his advantages.

One book, however, Corney studied at his leisure, the very sight of which worked on Shusannah " like madness in the blood." " This was what Corney called the 'olminick,' " a publication that foretold the precise dates of all the fairs far and near for the year. It also supplied information of a miscellaneous character, but excepting the state of the moon at any given period this was, by Corney at any rate, comparatively neglected.

" If you'd quit yer eternal readin' an' redd up yon corner," Shusannah said, nodding at the heap of boots and shoes, "it wud mebbe stan' to ye in the long run. Yer father (God rest his sowl) nivver took a book in his han,' an' time was ye had some sense yerself, but now yer head's for ivver in that book like a dog's in a stirabout pot."

Corney apparently heard not ; nevertheless he replaced the wisp of dog's ears in its accustomed hole in the chimney corner, and, lifting a 'lastic-sided boot on his leather apron, worked assiduously till towards bedtime. Then he rose, and filling the three-legged porridge pot with water hooked it on the crane over the fire. His mother and sister eyed this apparently innocent proceeding with lowering brows.

"Ann Jane Bradley'll have t' have her boots for the marra t' go till her uncle's wake," said Ally, with passion in her voice.

" Well, who's keepin' her from them ?" demanded Corney sweetly.

BOUND FOR THE MOY.

Ally, helplessly mute with indignation, let her creepie fall with a clatter as she rose to bar the door. But before she reached it the latch lifted and a shawled head appeared.

"Good-evenin', Ann Jane," said both the women, "come forrad."

"Take a couple of chairs, Ann Jane an' sit down," said the agreeable Corney.

"At this time o' night," exclaimed Ann Jane, glancing at the wag-at-the-wall," "shure it's warnin' for nine o'clock. No, I just called to mind Corney t'have me boots done for the morra evenin'."

"Och that'll be all right, wumman dear," said Corney.

"Now you'll be sartin sure t'have thim this time an' not dis'point me again, Corney. Good-night to yez all."

Corney followed her to the door. "I'll begin them the first thing in the mornin', ye'll have thim by twelve o'clock," he shouted after her.

Then he shut and barred the door, took off his apron, unhooked the pot and set it on a chair in the middle of the floor, rolled up his sleeves, undid his shirt at the neck, and covered face, neck, arms, and hands with a lather of yellow soap. After this ensued a puffing and blowing and snorting, and Corney emerged from the pot an awesome ogreish sight, his face scarcely distinguishable in point of colour from its thick thatch of red hair standing on end. Finally he dried and

polished himself with the roller at the back of the door till he shone like the inside of a well-kept copper preserving pan.

Darker and darker grew the faces of the two women as this vigorous toilet proceeded, but it was not till he had his foot on the first rung of the ladder that led to his lair that the silence was broken.

"Wud it be a fair question t'ask where yer for the morra?" inquired Shusannah politely.

"The Moy," replied the roseate Corney succintly over his shoulder.

* * * * * *

Hours before the two women were up the next morning he was gone. It was a wild morning, but Corney strode across the threshold enveloped in a great frieze coat that defied the elements. This garment represented part of the capital required to start him in his new profession, for never in his life before had he possessed such an article of apparel. To accomplish his journey here and there he usually took a "sate" on an outside car, so well patronised by gentlemen in the same line of business that one of them usually was obliged to sit in "the well." These being kindred spirits the conversation was animated if not exceptionally high-toned. In fact each raconteur vied with his neighbour for the high niche in their own particular temple of fame, by reason of success achieved alone by his; the hero's magnificent scorn, of veracity. Their tales certainly disproved the old copy-book adage; but then few of them had ever enjoyed the ministrations of the

copy-book. This diversion was usually only practised going. Coming home, for obvious reasons, their reminiscences were more rambling, and there was an over abundance of meaningless hilarity. On occasions when Corney bought a "baste" he trudged home behind it mile after mile through the mire, always on the alert to circumvent it at cross roads or anticipate its mad dash up some "loanen" that bore a resemblance to the approach of its late residence.

A DARK DEED.

As Shusannah and Ally sat at breakfast on that dreary morning, one on each side of the fire, bowls of strong tea in one hand and whacks of soda bread and butter in the other, their thoughts ran on the defaulter, and methods to stop him in his mad career were discussed. In former happy days Ally had assisted him in the minor details of his trade, and now the pile of neglected work in the corner seemed to her to have grown higher each time her eyes strayed in that direction. Unlike the ordinary skeleton, no cupboard was available, so that the observation of the most casual caller was attracted to it. Indeed Ally intentionally seated herself always with her back towards the disreputable heap of down at heels (such was her nature), while her mother faced it as she would have her greatest enemy. Suddenly a grim determination seemed to seize Shusannah's gaunt figure as though she braced up herself for a deed of daring. Hastily she turned the bowl round and round in her finger and thumb in order that the dregs of her tea might gather up the sediment of sugar lying at the bottom.

This she drained to the last drop and set the bowl on the floor beside her with a force that made the delf ring. Rising to her full height as quickly as her old bones would permit, she thrust an avenging hand into the hole in the wall.

At this, terror seized Ally. "Mother, for God's sake leave that book alone," she screamed. "He'll massacree us if anythin' happens t'it."

But Shusannah was not easily intimidated. Seizing the discoloured wisp of leaves, she spat on it, and stirring the fire into a blaze with the heel of her boot, flung the evil instigator into the middle of the flames. Then she turned quietly to prepare the pigs' morning repast.

Now that the deed was done, and by other hands, Ally secretly rejoiced, though she mixed trembling with her joy, and when Corney came home that night looking as if he had just been snatched from a watery grave, she was in bed, while Shusannah sat in icy state in the chimney corner, puffing with evident relish at her short cutty pipe.

Next day the delinquent stayed at home and did a fair day's work, but as poor Ally expressed it, "her heart was in her mouth the whole day long" waiting for the fatal moment of detection. When she perceived that approaching she purposed paying a visit to their next-door neighbour. However, the door was barred for the night before Corney, who had yawned over his work for the last hour, made the dreaded dive. Fruitlessly his long, bony fingers wandered round the vacant hole, while Ally hurriedly sought "the room" and hid her head in the bedclothes. Yet Corney's voice penetrated

there. "Yez is a pair of the foolishest weemen in the County Tyrone," he said, in the tone of one speaking to mischievous children. And without another word he made straight for his bed on "the laft."

CHAPTER II.

THE holocaust of the pernicious "olminick" had, as might be expected, not the slightest effect on Corney's conduct. He was going from bad to worse. His trade was practically gone and he had got into debt to a considerable extent for a man in his station of life. In fact, "he had come to the end of his tether," and must either "lave the counthry" or "marry a fortune." The former was repugnant to him, for he had come of "dacent people" who had always paid their way. Also, his duty to his mother deterred him, so that course was out of the question. Matrimony with a special accent on the last syllable was inevitable. Corney made up his mind to this honourable course of action one black night, with the result that he had not "closed an eye" when the dawn creeping up to his dark corner warned him that it was time to be up and away.

That day he sought the society of another frequenter of fairs, who he considered would be of service to him in the matter. Accordingly, after walking up and down the fair hill the length of the morning, with apparently no other motive than that of offering advice to buyer and seller, or giving gratuitous assistance in the clinching of bargains, Corney remarked to Peter that "the air was quare an' sharp for this time ov the year, an' he

thought they'd be a dale the betther of somethin' to give their insides a bit of a hate." Peter agreed that he was "mortyal could" and followed his friend into a public-house with the assumed air of reluctance that accompanies that rite. They passed intil the room behind the bar, where a good fire was burning, and Corney ordered "a plate of biscakes" with their drink.

THE WIDOW CONOLLY.

For a little the conversation ran on "stirks" and other mysterious quadrupeds, but soon Corney remarked indifferently.

"The people tells me it's time I was getting married."

"Well, an' what do you think yourself now?" said the knowledgeable Peter.

"Well, I suppose it be to be sometime," replied Corney.

"Ye wudent be expecktin' a young wan nor a purty wan," said his frank friend.

"Well, not to say overly young, an' as fur the purtiness I might be tempted to take somethin' else in the place of it."

"I don't doubt ye," said Peter.

By this time Peter knew that Corney was requesting his influence with a certain "partie" under discussion before, and Corney knew that Peter comprehended the situation perfectly, so there was no more beating about the bush, and the lady was at once decided upon.

Their choice was a "widda-woman," a neighbour and distant relative of Peter's. She lived at a comfortable distance from Kelly's Corner, so that no ominous

rumours would reach her as to Corney's embarrassed circumstances, Eventually, before they parted the actual day was appointed when Corney, introduced by Peter, would make his appearance on her horizon. Before that eventful day Corney bought a "dickey" a red handkerchief with large white spots, and a bottle of hair oil with which he hoped to coax his fierce locks into genteel position. Arrayed in these fresh charms, he informed Shusannah that he was "goin' up the country to look at a baste a man had for sale an' mightn't be back that night."

Shusannah's wrinkled features formed themselves into a smiling sneer. "Poor misfortunate baste," she said, "that would be taken in with an oily head an' an oily tongue." But Corney was out of hearing. So she turned to Ally. "'Tis a two-legged baste he's afther this time."

"What d'ye mean at all, mother?"

"He's goin' coortin'."

"Heavenly powers!" ejaculated Ally. "Is that the next trouble?"

* * * * * *

The Widow Conolly sat quietly knitting in her comfortable corner, her work for the day done, all unconscious of the fateful footsteps already in her loanen. She was a dark, stout little woman, her hair quite black, her face still unwrinkled. Her skirt was carefully pinned up over her black quilted petticoat—thrifty woman that she was—and she wore a small checked shawl three-corner-wise around her shoulders. Her

air was calm. The little niece that she kept for company learned her tasks by the light of the peat fire. On this scene of peaceful domesticity the latch was lifted and Peter entered, with Corney hanging back modestly in the rear.

Peter nodded familiarly and Mrs. Conolly rose.

"Good-evenin', Pether," she said, without apparently noticing the stranger, although in that instant she had divined her fate.

"We were just passin' the end of the loanen and thought we'd dhrop in," explained Peter.

"You're always welcome, Pether. Come forrad," she said, placing a chair for the stranger, while Peter made himself pleasantly at home on the heap of "turf" in the corner.

THE INTRODUCTION.

"This is a far-out fren, o' mine," announced Peter, "a good tradesman from a place called Kelly's Corner. He has lan', too, an' he come over to see thon cow that I had a mind to sell."

"'Tis a long way," remarked the widow.

"Not a bit too long to get what suits you," declared Corney.

The conversation then became general and run largely on the bovine species, next on farming, and by-and-by on marrying, though no one could say how it was led up to that apparently irrelevant topic.

"Give a guess now," urged Peter, "whether you think this man from the look of him is married or not."

Corney to cover his assumed confusion lifted a lighted "turf" with the tongs, and applying it to his clay pipe smacked his lips vigorously.

The widow looked at the stranger quietly.

" It never struck me that he was other than a dacent married man like yourself."

" In our counthry," said Corney boldly, "the people dissent marry so young as in these parts."

" Thrue for you," exclaimed Peter admiringly.

" They wait," explained Corney, "till they have a han'ful in the bank to fall back on."

" Och, Corney, it's not every one is the managin' man that you are," demurred Peter.

"An' who does the turns in the house for you?" inquired the widow with kindly interest.

"Me ould mother—God bless 'er!—but she can't last long now, an' then I'll be left me lief lone."

"Well, indeed, that's anything but heartsome," conceded the widow.

There was a few minutes' silence.

" Only it's so late," offered their hostess by way of entertainment, " I'd take you out to have a look at the cattle."

" Mebbe I'll take a look in in the mornin' to see them afore I go home," proposed Corney.

" Just as you please."

BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM.

The consequence of that morning call, and a few others that followed at short intervals, was conveyed to

the countryside by placards posted on all available walls and gates in the neighbourhood, stating that Mrs. Bridget Conolly's "substantial residence, valuable farm stock, furniture, &c.," would be sold by auction at an early date.

After this sensational occurrence the widow Conolly retired to her sister's house, from which Corney led her a fortnight later to the altar.

The homecoming of the bridal pair to Kelly's Corner was purposely delayed to a late hour. To Shusannah alone had Corney confided his matrimonial intentions with the wheedling air of one who, having discovered a gold mine, insinuates that his confidante shall go shares.

"An' was she willin'?" inquired Shusannah with astonishment, "to face two weemen in the house?"

"Och, as plissant as the flowers in May!"

The car was dismissed at some distance from the "Corner," and bride and groom walked stealthily to their own door. Ally, who since dusk had kept her eye to the chink of the blind retreated and left Shusannah to do the honours.

Corney strode in like a conquering hero with Mrs. Corney at his heels "Here she is . . . Here's herself." Then to his bride, "Come forrad woman, an' make yourself at home. This is me mother."

Shusannah shook hands. "You're entirely welcome, an' may you have good luck. My day will not be long, an' Ally the craythur won't interfere with ye."

The composed bride looked somewhat bewildered.

"Och shure I disremembered to tell ye about Ally, woman, dear," he said gaily. "Troth I was thinkin' so much of yourself that it put iverybody else out av me head."

After this brazen declaration Corney disappeared, leaving all explanations to his mother.

"He never toul' you he had a sisther then."

Ally came forward with outstretched hands.

"It's sorry I am for your treatment. I trust you'll never rue the day you came through me."

Poor peasant Ally! Had she come of a line of earls she could not have shown finer breeding. Her simple sincerity sweetened a difficult situation. From that moment a bond united the three women.

Corney now reappeared, having in tow his neighbours on each side, whom he introduced to the new Mrs. Boyle. He had indeed called them in to rejoice with him—in short to count the bride's fortune!

The three men seated themselves at the table, on which Corney had placed a stout package side by side with a "quart bottle", while the women talked by the fire in subdued tones.

"Two hundred and seventy-five pounds in notes and goold!" related his friends afterwards at many a fireside around Kelly's Corner. "An' a quate woman in to the bargain," they added.

DISILLUSIONED.

So Corney Boyle had wooed and won a fortune and a "quate woman," and was proud of his achievement.

He felt young again, and life merely beginning. A long vista of pleasure stretched before him, and he began planning. He would start next fair day for "The Moy" and buy a milch cow or two and Kate could make butter, and what more profitable than that? He would buy a bit more land and graze young animals. There was undoubtedly money there. He looked forward gleefully to a really satisfying career. Fairs and markets spelt society for Corney and provided the necessary excitement demanded by one of his social temperament, and fingering lovingly the strong linen bag that the widow had made to hold her fine dowry he stowed it away in his safe—the convenient hole in the wall.

Next day while he was out "gallivantin'" as his mother described it, the new relation was making the acquaintance of her "inlaws." Corney's concealment of Ally's existence had opened a book of revelation for the bride,and Shusannah was not failing to turn its pages.

When Mrs. Corney inquired in which direction her husband's land lay Shusannah's laugh confused her somewhat.

"Lan' is it? Why he hasn't the brenth of my feet." She obtruded one of those members whose proportions, by the way, were not really such a figure of undervaluation as she had intended.

"It's well he has his trade itself," said the disillusioned bride.

"Where is it?" dramatically demanded Shusannah. "Gone to the four winds! Why, he would hardly put a toe-kep on ye now if ye were to make 'im Lord Lieu-

tenant. Forbye," she supplemented, "he's that far in the people's books that I'm ashamed to look the neighbours in the face."

Another day rose and Corney lounged about deliciously in an easy undress. His wife enquired why he was not working. " I never was one to thole idleness," she remarked.

" Och blethers, woman, blethers. It's not every day a man gets married."

" Surely two days is enough to waste on getting married. Start on somethin' now and redd up that corner."

He selected a gaping shoe and tied on his apron. " It's hardly worth startin' the day—but just to plaze ye—for I'm for ' The Moy ' in the mornin'."

" Are ye?"

" Oh, aye, I must get another baste or two."

She said nothing, for she was a "quate woman."

FRENCH LEAVE.

As they sat at dinner around the basket of potatoes placed in the middle of the floor, deftly peeling them with their fingers and dabbing them at the mound of salt in the centre, which was their "kitchen," Mrs. Corney said she intended going to Williamstown to do some errands, but would be back on the evening train.

As she started, dressed in her wedding dolman and bonnet, her umbrella in her hand, and her market basket over her arm, Corney felt she looked a credit to him, and told her so.

"Take your time now, wumman dear, an' enjoy yourself," he said gallantly. "Are ye shure ye 'ave enough money with ye?" She said she had enough.

When he watched her admiringly out of sight he went for a "dandher." Old Micky M'Avoy was sitting on the ditch by the roadside. He sat down beside him, and they passed the afternoon pleasantly exchanging badinage with the passers-by. Then he strolled back to the house, feeling inclined for his tea.

"I'll put twenty poun' in the trousers pocket that I'm wearin' the morra," he said to himself as he entered the kitchen. "I must have had somebody's blessin' for such good luck comin' my road. May the saints be praised!" he exclaimed piously, as he thrust his hand into the hole in the wall. And as he did so it actually crossed his mind that the saints had been even better to him than he deserved. So evidently thought the saints, for his fingers closed only on the dust of years. Notes and goold and quate woman—one and all had taken French leave.

"THE OUL' RESIDHENTER."

Down the sweet road to Killary,
To market and to fair they go;
While happy me sits on the "ditch,"
An' shanaughs with the ones I know.

For Killary's a great wee town,
An' if the fashions you would see,
Just glance at Nolan's windies there,
(God save us all from vanity!)

'Most everything for man and beast
You'll find in Killary;
But mind! don't give them what they ask,
Just about half (between you an' me).

There's brogues to keep the clabber out,
An' spades to dig the lan';
There's "bissoms" hangin' at the doors,
An' bags of meal an' bran.

Sez Father Dan, whiles he would prech
Agin the dhrink in Killary—
"Yez work like horses an' yez spend
Like asses what should come to me."

A powerful praycher—Father Dan,
"Here's a parable of life," sez he,
"When I had teeth I had no beef,
An' now I've beef—no teeth—d'ye see?"

"While happy me sits on the ditch."

The Orange boys walk on the " Twelfth,"
But dear ! they never meddle wi' me ;
Though I dhrown my shamrock with the best
On St. Patrick's Day in Killary.

Och, oh ! I be to leave it soon
For the heavenly scenery,
May kind Saint Pether appoint my seat
Where I can view oul' Killary !

A PURE ZION.

IN the small session-room of Drumchin Presbytérian Church sat the committee (always pronounced with the accent on the last syllable). At the preceding service Mr. M'Kee, the minister, had asked them to wait "as an important matter was to come before them for consideration."

This disclosure had evidently been made. The old clergyman laid an open letter on his knee and looked up inquiringly. He read astonishment on every countenance. The cause was simply this.

Thirty years previously a lad—one of their poorest—had gone forth from them to seek a livelihood in that El Dorado across the Atlantic that still allures the youth of Erin. Attaining to wealth and honour, and attributing all his success to the influence in his early years of the old meeting-house, he was ever eager for opportunity to befriend it. Hearing casually that the praise service was of a weak order, he now wrote to offer the congregation an organ. Thirty years of religious life in a great city of the west had apparently familiarised him with methods of worship that were anathema at his early home, and rendered him unconscious of the enormity of his proposal.

For once there was no difference of opinion in the committee, and the minister called on the senior elder to close the meeting with prayer.

"O Lord," the old man prayed, "we are very sinful, but yet we are not so sinful as to worship Thee with

instruments of wood and stone, the work of men's hands. Others Thou knowest have fallen into this snare through vain glory. Forgive them, O Lord, and give us thankful hearts that we are not even as they."

Out of the fusty little room they straggled into the drizzle of a November day. They trudged along in the middle of the road, with bent backs, but with a cheerful solemnity, to their various homes. James M'Kibben had five Irish miles to go, passing the door of Ballymorison Meeting-house on his way. Inside its walls paraphrases were sung.

Matthew Harbison—the old elder who had prayed—overtook Jessie Ruddy, whose progress had been unusually slow that day.

"Well, Mattha," she said, turning as the even thud of his stick came nearer and nearer, "ye wur kep' a mortyal while in the com-mit-tee the day. Are yez goin' to give Drumchin a lick of pent at last?"

"Naw," answered Matthew, with an air of mystery, "ye couldn't guess what we wur considherin' about the day, Jessie, if ye wur till stan' there till the May sacrament."

"Man oh!" said she.

The elder's stately old mouth drooped at the corners, whimsically—

"How would ye like an insthrumint in Drumchin, Jessie?"

She stopped as if shot, but quickly recovered herself.

"Och, its wan of yer jokes, Mattha," she said pleadingly.

" Well, it's the joke that kep' us the day anyway," he said, grimly.

Then he explained the matter to her.

" Well, of all the offers I ivver heerd tell of, that bates all," said she, lifting her hands in astonishment.

"Aye, it bates Banagher," agreed the old elder—"an' him christened in Drumchin," he added.

" But I'll tell you what it is, Jessie," he continued, "it's them towns what corrupt the very elect. Why, wumman dear, in Belfast some of the meetin' houses, I'm toul', has both orgins an' hymns, an' mebbe ye'll not believe me," he took a step nearer and lowered his voice, "they give out cards to admit to the table of the Lord."

" Instead of tokens," she gasped, "is it playin' cards ?"

"Aw, deed it might nearly as well," said he, with a mournfully deliberate shake of the head in lieu of words to express his feelings.

" There's no knowin' what we'll come to ourselves in the coorse of time," reflected Jessie, sadly, "now I do what my mother nivver would have done ; nobody could have houl' her undher any roof where they sung aught but the twelve tunes of David. Dear but she was fond of him. I suppose ye have heard tell that was how I got me name ."

" Naw," said Mattha, "but I often thought it an odd name for these parts."

" Well," said Jessie, "me mother detarmined before I was born that if a was a boy she would call me David."

" Just so," said Mattha, polite but mystified.

"Well then, it was a girl, an' she just called me Jessie, for, says she, " I'll have her in the family anyway.' "

"Clivver !" ejaculated Mattha.

"Aye, ye may well say that ; nobody could ivver take me mother at a disshort."

They parted at Jessie's "loanen," but the old man was not out of sight till a "hoy, Mattha !" made him turn his head. Jessie, her Sunday skirt clutched in each hand was running down the hill after him.

" Mattha," she panted, "do ye think Robert Jackson 'll be offended at our refusin' his offer ? Wouldn't it be the quare mistake if he was nivver to send us nothin' more ?"

" It wud that," agreed Mattha.

" Well," urged Jessie, "couldn't you put it to 'himself' to say to Mr. Jackson in his answer that our singin' wasn't gran' enough to match a harmonicum— or somethin' like that ?"

" Mister Mackee 'll tell the truth," said Matthew, frigidly, "at laste I nivver knowed him to do aught else."

* * * * * * *

The innocent organ had hardly exhausted itself as a topic of conversation around turf hearths when Drumchin was paralysed by the death of its minister. For forty-five years Mr. M'Kee had shepherded Drumchin, and a king might envy his mourning, which will last as long as a heart beats that knew him.

The usual procedure followed. What was the consternation of Drumchin to find that it came under the new law of Assembly on amalgamation, and that its

finances would not permit of a separate existence when within a certain distance of other congregations, and it was barely a mile from Ballymorison?

Unite with Ballymorison! whose minister wore a collar fastened behind, adorned himself with pulpit trappings, and gave out paraphrases!

"The service in Ballymorison," declared James M'Kibben to the commission in charge, "is a stench in the nostrils of Almighty God."

Despite this announcement, the commission were firm, and it was with overcast countenance that the old elder called on his way home to tell Jessie Ruddy the news.

"They say we be to 'malgamate, Jessie."

"What on earth's that, Mattha?"

"It manes we be to join Ballymorison."

The potstick dropped from Jessie's hands and rattled on the floor.

"They'll nivver 'malgamate me," she cried, fiercely, "I'll go an' say me prayers in Drumchin if there wasn't one there but meself, aye if I had to break the windys every Sabbath day."

Such was the attitude of entire Drumchin towards amalgamation.

When the forlorn old man had gone on his way, Jessie seated herself on a creepie and rocked herself to and fro. Suddenly she jumped up, overturning the stool with a clatter, to the reproachful amazement of the lady-like cat beside her. Darting to the window she seized an inkbottle and pen. The ink was dried up, but she

induced it to flow again by an application of water. Her pen scratched up and down over the discoloured paper. Thrice she re-wrote her deliverance, not that the last edition pleased her much better than the first, but she had come to the end of her stock of stationery. Then she read aloud, critically to herself :—

"dere robert,

"this comes Hopping to find you well as it laves me at preasant an i Hope yule not take it ill of me callin you in yure name but you an Me was at drumchin Sabbath skule thegither an in the kuminikents class thegither dere Robert we be in sore trubble in drumchin unless we pay a dale more nor were able we be to unight with balymorison dere robert God forbid but we be tarrible far behind in the sustainshinder fun we were all Thankfull to you for yer ofer of a orgin but dere robert where wud we get anybody that cud play it from yure old frend

Jessie ruddy.

It required a further application of energy to procure the correct address, but that difficulty also was surmounted before the sun was far on his journey next morning.

A month later, old Mr. Harbison, senior elder of Drumchin, received a letter from Mr. Jackson of New York. This missive intimated that he (Mr. Jackson) had always intended that Drumchin should benefit after his death ; but that hearing of the peculiar circumstances in which his beloved old church was placed, he had

great pleasure in handing over a sum of £500, the interest of which was to be used to augment its finances yearly.

* * * * * *

After a thorough probing and weighing and searching and sifting of the aspirants for Drumchin pulpit, a young man who had proved himself sound in the essentials was secured. And it was with a peculiar ring of triumph Drumchin quavered forth its song of thanksgiving on his ordination day :—

" Now Israel
May say and that truly,
If that the Lord
had not our cause maintained,
If that the Lord
had not our right sustained.

. . . . . .

Therefore our help
is in the Lord's great name,
Who heaven and earth
by His great power did frame."

YOUR OWN.

There's many a loss comes by one's door ;
Thank God if it's only money !
Shure the only differs you wear an ould coat,
And eat your bread without honey.
But if all the gold in Ireland's banks
Were piled on your lone hearthstone
Where one lately sat, 'twouldn't warm your heart
If that one you lost was your own.
Your own, your own,
Always your own,
Though the River of Death separateth,
They're aye your own, your own.

When the dusk creeps on at day-le-gone,
What would you do I wonder
If the kindly friends—praise God for friends !—
Didn't sit your thatch in under ?
Oh ! your heart would burst if just at the first
There was no one to hear your moan,
Or listen while you go over again
The wee cracks all about your own.
Your own, your own,
Always your own,
Though the River of Death separateth,
They're aye your own, your own.

Or all the plenishings of this wee house—
If there's one above all that's dearer,
'Tis the tickin' tickin' Wag-at-the-wall
Shoutin': "Every minute you're nearer";
Aye nearer you be. asleep or awake,
Mebbe this dark night ends the race,
And a light bids you rise—'tis the shine from the eyes
Of your own as they kiss your face.
Your own, your own,
Always your own,
Though the River of Death separateth,
They're aye your own, your own.

THE TENT.

"No chile of mine will ivver marry other than a good Presbytarn," declared Daniel M'Gillop to the minister.

They were sitting before the glowing turf sods in the little parlour, after a day's "visitation" that had ended with tea at Daniel's.

Daniel was a big man, with a broad, intelligent forehead, high cheek-bones, and typical Ulster long upper-lip, which, like his chin, was clean-shaven, while underneath, from ear to ear, straggled a short sandy fringe. He explained his system of shaving by saying that "he couldn't thole any hairs convanyent till his mouth."

"Presbytarns they were born an' Presbytarns they'll die accordin' to my will."

He made this announcement in the strident tones of one who compels the attention of someone not necessarily a listener, to the conversation hitherto.

Tillie, the only other occupant of the room, was gathering up the table-cloth by the corners, preparatory to the shaking off the crumbs in the kitchen floor.

Indifferent to the matter under discourse, she left the room with her bundle, but stopped when she had got to the other side of the door, and bent her head attentively.

Daniel's voice was now lowered and strangely tender. "She's the best of a wee girl," he said, "an' the very spit of her mother; but"—here he cast about in his

mind how to frame the intimation for clerical ears—"whiles she's spakin' to a Epis-copal."

The old minister, who was very nigh the borderland where "all creeds have found one fold," smiled patiently. "Do not condemn him for that alone," he said, gently.

"Och, of coorse they're dacent-livin' people, an' all that, I'll allow. Man an' boy I've lived fifty year, our lan' marchin' theirs, an' nivver yit was any of the kettle sick an' William John Morrison didn't sit up night about wi' me, or trouble in the house an' him an' his not make it lighter. An' Sammy's a nice clane boy—but then Tillie must mine she's a M'Gillop (had Daniel said Hapsburg his voice could not have given a prouder ring). "An' nivver yit has a M'Gillop enveighled with the similitude of Prelacy or Popery."

"Ye mine," continued Daniel, warming to his favourite theme—" I've toul' it to ye many's the time—Tillie's forbear, him an' his brother, crossed the say to Irelan' in an open boat, with nothin' but the clothes on their back, fleein' from Bloody Clayvers."

When the conversation reached this point, Tillie shook her cloth.

After some time she entered the room, followed by a little brother and sister.

"Why where are yez for at this time of night?" enquired Daniel .

"I promised to call for Miss Quilty to go to the tent preachin', an' James an' Matty wants to go too," said Tillie. The roses round her hat were not pinker than Tillie's soft, rounded cheeks.

"Dear but yez is ill aff for a bit of divarshun," said Daniel, good humouredly, "but away ye go an' lave Mr. M'Kee an' me till our crack."

"Who is holding tent services now?" asked the minister, after the good-byes had been said.

"Och, the foolishest come yet," said Daniel tolerantly; "but indeed it's little I know about them an' their antics."

When at length the old man rose stiffly, Daniel lifted the hat which he had laid aside for tea, "to put him a piece."

"Why, Misther M'Kee," said he, endeavouring to suit his strides to the feeble steps, "ye should have a powny: man ye're not fit for the walkin' at all at all."

When they parted at the crossroads, Daniel watched the familiar figure go so slowly out of sight, and a revelation of the steps taken so gladly in the service of Drumchin entered his soul. "We might have raised a lock more steepins," he said to himself, "but he nivver complained—no he nivver complained."

There was a strange feeling in his throat as he turned down the Ballymorison road to meet the "childher."

"Oh, Mr. M'Gillop, ye should have been there," exclaimed Miss Quilty.

"What was the text?" enquired Daniel.

"I just disrimimber it at the minute, but he preached all agin money, an' that Christians should have nothin' to say to it."

"I suppose the clothes grows on his own back, for he's like enough a sheep by his talk," said Daniel, a little hotly.

" Mr. Bleary wouldn't wear even a collar," championed Miss Quilty.

" Well, I nivver wear wan meself barrin' the Sabbath or a funeril, but I'm boun' to say that most of the wrong doin' in the worl' is acted by them that wears none," argued Daniel.

"An', Da," said James, as soon as he could get his tongue in, "he asked me if I was convarted."

"An' what did ye tell him?" said Daniel.

" I sayed I didn't need it : that I was a Presbytarn !"

But Tillie was silent ; evidently her thoughts were too deep for words.

Day by day Daniel regarded the tent with less indifference, and in a week's time he cursed its pole and stakes, root and branch, for every evening, with or without Miss Quilty, saw Tillie under its canvas. Matters were brought to a climax by a hint from his neighbour, that there was a personal element in the attraction that it held for her. " For, Denyill," said William John, " I was there meself, an' thon preacher lad—well all I'll say is he has as much white in his eye as would make backs for a pair of weskits. Forbye, I'm toul' he's a great coortier."

That night Daniel issued a mandate to his household that from henceforth no M'Gillop was ever to attend service in a tent.

As not seldom happens, he was the first to break his own law : for coming home the very next evening from "the far lan'," the sound of music stole on his ear. What Daniel would have called a "human hymn" was being led by a lusty voice that carried over three fields.

In a moment his determination was taken. He cleared the "ditch," and two others that came in his way, as he made a bee-line for the tent. The singing had ceased, and the sermon begun, before Daniel squeezed himself in among the standers at the back.

A good-looking young man in a tweed suit, but collarless, was haranguing the audience. But owing just then to some interruption caused by a few mischievous youths, he had abandoned his subject to administer something applicable to the needs of the moment.

" I knowed a man once," he said, in sad reminiscent tones, and a dolorous wag of the head, " I knowed a man once," he repeated, "that come to a meetin' just like this. (Pause). "An' what did he come for? He come for to laugh, an' for to mock, an' for to make fun. And what did he do?" (Long pause). " But he went mad!"

This apt illustration of instant retribution had apparently the desired effect, and the preacher took up again the thread of his discourse.

Mr. Bleary had adopted the Socratian method of expounding his theme by means of question and answer. With waving arms and magnificent scorn, he swept the clergy all and sundry contemptuously aside, heaping contumely on something they evidently possessed, but which was worse than foolishness in his sight. This objectionable acquisition he called "eddication."

" Years an' years at them colleges! An' what for?" he asked.

An attempt at an answer to this homethrust would have been fairly ridiculous, so he went on.

"Dear brothers an' sisters, I ask you to look at the Apostle Paul. Could any of them bate him at the preachin'? An' what was he? Just a poor country lad, brought up at the foot of the mountain Gamaliel!"

Daniel in his headlong charge for the open air almost upset those between him and the exit. He was bursting with indignation at the preacher, at those who listened to him, above all at Tillie! Sammy Morrison actually met him on his way home, and, had Sammy only known it, that would have been the psychological moment to propose for Tillie's hand.

* * * * * *

Like Isaac of old, it was Daniel M'Gillop's custom to go out to meditate at the eventide. He would "dandher" down the loanen, old Captain, the collie, at his heels, and, where it opened on the public road, would stand, hands in pockets, and eyes fixed steadily on the opposite hedge. Captain sat on his haunches, and also admired the hedge. True it was a M'Gillop hedge. Daniel was lost in contemplation of it a few evenings later when he was aroused by an approaching bicycle.

"That gomeril of a preachin' fool as I'm a living man," he said to himself, and instantly resumed his study of the hedge.

The rider dismounted.

"Could you tell me where this road goes to?"

"Deed I donno," said Daniel, indifferently, "it's mostly here when I get up in the mornin' anyway."

"Mebbe you could tell me if I'm near Mr. M'Gillop's," said the preacher.

Daniel looked the enquirer up and down.

"If he thinks a sin of a collar," he thought, "I wondher how such a fine bicycle sits so aisy on his conscience."

Aloud he said, "Aye, it's not a great piece from here. Do ye know him?"

"No."

"I just thought as much, or ye wouldn't be in such a hurry to see him."

"How is that? I know Miss M'Gillop," said the preacher.

"Well, let me tell ye that Denyill M'Gillop's a dasparit man—fair dasparit—an' if he on'y thought ye wud as much as luk at his daughter, he wud take down the gun an' chase ye across the moss, an' ye might count yerself lucky if ye got home without a whean of pickles in yer heels."

"I'll just be goin' on anyway," said the preacher.

"Away ye go," said Daniel.

As Daniel turned down his loanen he was an amusing sight. He mouth was opened to the widest extent—no mean space—he swayed backwards and forwards, he slapped his legs till poor Captain, with wistful eyes, appealed to him to demean himself as the life-long friend of a sober old dog should.

He sat down to his porridge. His generous spoon shovelled the good stuff into his great bowl of milk, "whummelled" it round in order to convey as much of

the liquid as possible with it to its final destination. Finally, he threw back his head and drained the bowl of its last dregs.

"Them's brave wans the night, Tillie," he said.

* * * * * *

Tillie M'Gillop never saw Mr. Bleary again. His tent was moved to pastures new, and the clergy still live and love and serve around Drumchin.

For all her flirtation with Episcopacy, Tillie eventually landed in Ballymorison Meeting-house. When Daniel spends a Sabbath with her he accompanies her thither, and when a paraphrase is being sung he sits and reads his Bible ostentatiously. As they occupy the front seat to the right of the pulpit, Daniel is in a favourable position to show forth that, even in these degenerate days, a M'Gillop may be found who refuses to bow a knee in the Temple of Rimmon.

TO "TINKER."

When all I loved had gone, and left to me
Were nights and days of empty loneliness,
Behold ! you came and took possession of my house,
my goods, myself.
Ah ! then I laughed once more to see your claims,
My eatables you stole, and when my voice rebuking rose
Gazed calmly at me unabashed.
The round hole eaten in the apple pie set down to cool—
The chicken holus bolus taken from the table laid—
For such bold raids my hand attempted chastisement
At which 'twas gaily seized pretending all was fun.
For toys, especially my garments served,
Most suitable the feather in my hat !

Dear ! you repaid the little damage done a thousandfold !
With love that pies of pearls, and golden chickens could
not buy
For even at times our nearest human friends will hurt,
But never, never for one little moment, would your loyal
doggy heart,
Fail in allegiance to your Own.

My presence was your sun and moon and stars, your
heaven and earth,
The void my absence.
My worthless goods you stole indeed—but most of all
you stole my heart,

Dear, how you loved ! and mine perchance fell short of
yours,
For thus had God fashioned you, and linked Himself
the mystic bond
Of Man and his Dog.

Snatched from me in the middle of your play
You lay—the whitest snowflake at my feet—
That bounding, eager heart by violence stopped,
Sightless the yearning eyes that sought my will.
Yet well I know on that " New Earth " where cruel man
a place has forfeited,
We two old chums shall climb the purple hills fearing
no setting sun,
For everything that lives and loves, and loves to the
death, must meet again.

"If I bring her roun' will ye marry
me afore Holleve?"

THE BLACK ART.

MRS. Kate Hannigan built up her fire generously from the cosy heap of "turf" in the corner, swept up the hearth with a heather "bissom," put up a reassuring hand to each side of the parting of her brown hair, and sat down to receive.

"The pickle next the wind," was the Widow Hannigan. A jointure of five acres and a cow was a "sittin' down" not to be found every day.

This evening she admitted that she wasn't herself at all, at all. "It's the frettin' about the cow," she said, "mebbe another drop o' tay would put heart intil me."

Lifting the canister from the high mantelboard she put a heaped spoonful in the tin "tea-drawer," and after pouring a small quantity of water on to it from the boiling kettle, left it to "draw" in the red hot ashes until she heard it bubbling cheerfully. For Mrs. Hannigan held the usual opinion that "tea was nothing the worse of a wee scud of a boil."

They are ignorant indeed, who suppose that with the act of swallowing ends the charm of that alluring potion. To Mrs. Hannigan it was a familiar spirit laying bare in clear pictorial language the coveted secrets of the future. The liquid quickly disposed of, and her bowl turned upside down and round three times, she read aloud to herself in an awed but entirely convinced monotone.

"There they are again! The cow—I know her by the horns—an' the fair wan an' the dark wan—they're both dhriving her—but the dark wan's the forradest!"

She looked long and steadily into the heart of the glowing peat.

"There's no denyin' but what he's enticin' and has the way with him." Here the comely widow fell into pleasant muse from which she resolutely emerged and ejaculated: "But may God preserve me and him, an' give me a God-fearin' man like Felix Daly. Never yet was me fortune speyed out but what 'twas said, "beware of a dark man." Peter was fairish, an' Felix is sandy-complexioned, but the other . . . . . ." She started guiltily to her feet whilst the magic bowl clattered in fragments on the tiles.

"Why, Felix, ye come in that quiet and slithery, like an ould woman, that I never knew till you're standin' fornenst me," she said reproachfully, "and me sittin' here my lone an' frettin' meself to death over the cow,"

"Is she no better at all, Kate?" said Felix, accommodating himself on a three-legged "creepie."

"Not a hate, an' a look out of her eyes at me, when I go into the byre, like a Christian, that goes to me very heart. I think I be to get a cow-doctor afore long to run his eyes over her."

To look at Felix's watery blue eyes was to see that he took life seriously. He at least knew himself for a wise man.

"Never you bother with a cow-doctor," he counselled impressively. "I have a kind of notion meself what's wrong with her."

"An' if ye have, could ye not give me the cure?" said the widow somewhat snappishly. Why, oh why, did this "dacent man" on whom she strove so hard to place her affections irritate her above all others?

"Whist, spake aisy," Felix cautioned. Then he leant forward and whispered: "Did ye never take thought that she might be *blinked?*" He paused solemnly on the last word, and then added meaningly: "For there's them coming about the house that has the *Black Art.*"

"I did hear a whisper of that many's a time, but I didn't heed it," she said at last, defiantly. "Forbye I have seven horse shoes nailed roun' the byre."

"Och, talk sense, wumman," said Felix with superiority. "It's not fairies you're dealing with now, but flesh and blood. An' ye can't deny that oul' John Hughes had the "Black Art," he said challengingly "an' that it ascends from father to son—the very birds in the bushes knows that!"

"I never knowed oul' John, he was dead afore I come here, an' Peter, dacent man, had an ill-word of nobody."

"Well, mebbe you'll believe me when I tell ye that me own father told me on his death-bed, atween the wandeherin's of his mind. Wanst oul' John an' me fayther had made up to go to Ballymorison fair together. Me father, as a wise man would, kep' his clock a bit on the fast side, an' it wasn't much more than four o'clock in the mornin' when he called for oul' John. It was a winther's mornin'. black as jit, an' rainin' very weighty. Oul' John was fair demented at bein' woke out of his sound sleep with me father's thumpin' on the windy with his staff."

"What brings ye at this onearthly hour?" he thundhered, "with a demonsthration fit to wake them thats sleepin' in the chapel yard below. I'd advise ye to be steppin' on yerself for mebbe I'll not go a toe the day at all." So with that me father turns to go his lone, an' he turns, an' he turns again, an' *but if he could get an inch furdher.* An' every dhrop o' rain fallin' fit to fill a tay-cup, an' the wind blowin' him every art but the road to Ballymorison.

"After a mortal time out comes oul' John, as pleasant as the flowers in May. "Why, man dear, were ye that foolish as to wait for me?" says he. But listen to this, Kate—the minute oul' John spoke, *if me father didn't get the power of his legs again*, an' what's more not another tent o' rain fell or wind soughed."

The fire burned low and the kitchen was almost in darkness. The "wag-at-the-wall" warned for eight. Felix scraped his stool over the floor and prepared to offer a protecting arm against the powers of necromancy. The widow rose, lit the lamp that hung against the wall, and seating herself again widened the distance.

"It's a fearsome coming over," she said with a shiver.

"It's as true as I'm sittin' here," declared Felix, "an' that's little of it. Wait till ye hear the spell he put upon meself, an' me a witless child."

Felix resumed his saga.

"A lock of us wan day we knowed oul' John was away at market, stole into his orchard—for his honeybottles. the size of yer head tempted us. I was up the tree shakin' them down, when who comes up the hill but the oul' bhoy himself. He was lookin' fair at me, an'

he kept smilin'. I strove to get down like ten madmen, but an' if I had been cemented to the branches I couldn't a' gripped them tighter. An' oul' John nivver put an inch to his step. Och the batin' was bad enough," said Felix shaking his head at the terrible recollection, "but it was nothin' to the sittin' waitin' for it."

A firm step, followed by the speedy lifting of the latch, came on the two in the silence that ensued, like a further manifestation of the supernatural.

But it was " young John's" very substantial embodiment that appeared round the "jam-wall"—a broad-shouldered, thick-necked, well set-up man of forty was " young John." The warm glow of his daring presence caused the colour to rush back to the widow's cheeks, which had noticeably paled under Felix's tense disclosures.

" Don't stir now," said young John, affably, as Felix shuffled his stool out of politeness, " I'm not just for sittin' at the present time." He carried a bundle in a red handkerchief which he thrust on Kate. " There's some ' honeybottles ' for Holleve," he said," for it's nearin' on to that now."

"Aye, that's just what me and Felix was saying as you came in," said the widow," but indeed it's anything but a heartsome time for me. It was on Holleve night two years ago that me poor Peter died, an' now I'm in trouble again over the cow. God knows what'll happen her."

" God knows," echoed " young John " piously.

Felix took a scornful side glance at him meant to be expressive of contempt for such blatant hypocrisy.

"How's the baste doin', Kate?"

"No better; she only gave a wee skig of milk in the bottom of the can this mornin'," chanted Kate dolefully.

"Och, she'll mend yet. Many's the dwam cattle take. Can she ate her mash?"

"No, she wouldn't lip it," lamented Kate.

John turned to Felix. "What's your opinion of her?" he inquired.

"I don't purfess to be knowledgeable about cattle," replied Felix with dignity.

"I b'lieve ye," said John.

He turned to go. When his swift footsteps died away the light in the chimney corner burned dimmer, and a gloom seemed to hold the vacancy he left behind him.

"Dear, but he's the quare hearty man now," said the widow rousing herself.

"He's that presumptious you would think he had an income," said Felix hotly. "That man comes into nobody's dwellin' for any good, believe me. Did you not feel somethin' strange comin' over ye when he was stannin' there so boul' an' imperent?"

"I did," confessed the widow.

"Well, watch yerself now, an' do what I tell you, Kate, for its betther to be sure than sorry. If the cow's no better by the mornin' take an' go up to Terence Dogherty—for he's a knowledgeable man—and get the charm from him, an' you an' me, the two of us will bring her roun' yet. . . . An' mebbe about the New Year we might think o' spakin' to the priest. Would you be willin' agin that, Kate?"

"We'll talk of it agin next summer mebbe," said Kate slowly.

"Well, mind now, I have yer promise for next summer. Good night, Kate."

Felix whistled as he crossed the fields to his home.

* * * * * *

On former happy times it was "Strawberry's" wont on getting a delicious whiff coming through the byre door of her "mash" to strain her neck joyfully in anticipation, and, when all was consumed but the wood, to lick the tub to a polish with her great tongue.

But alas! next morning the appetizing mess cooled beneath her lofty nose, while as she looked on, the tears sprang to her mistress's eyes and overflowed. Before noon Kate had sought and was granted an audience of the inspiring Terence Dogherty.

This ancient wizard, whose little round head was believed to be the repository of mystic lore and wisdom in matters sealed to the eyes of his fellowmen was revered by the countryside and held in respectful awe.

After listening alertly to Mrs. Hannigan's melancholy description of poor "Strawberry's" bad condition and symptoms, he put some direct questions to her as to whether she might unwittingly have offended the "wee people." She denied all knowledge of such possibilities, but hinted that there might be suspicions of other uncanny mortal influences in connection with the situation, in fact she used the ominous word "blinked."

At that the oracle said that that was his opinion from the first.

"The way to find out if she's 'blinked," he directed, "is to try an' get a klipe of the shirt of the man what you think done it, an' then burn it right afore her nose. If she leps in the air then it was him, if she doesn't lep, then it must be the disorder that ails her, and you be to physic her."

After paying the fee for the consultations, Kate turned down the hill thinking at first that the prescription would be a quite a simple proceeding, but at every step of the way home it appeared to her less feasible. She had decided on the impossibility of its accomplishment just as Felix called to inquire.

"Lave it to me now, lave it to me," he urged grandiloquently. "On Monday evenin' when the washin's out on the hedge, I'll negotiate the matter." Felix spoke with lofty confidence in his own ability, and closed his left eye knowingly.

"Whiles I think I would rather die nor do such an action," said Kate. "What if he comes to hear of it!"

* * * * * *

At dusk on Monday evening accordingly, Felix quitted his work in the Major's garden, and with such an air of indifference as would have made anyone he met notice him, he sauntered up the hill on the top of which was the Hughes' homestead.

His feelings indeed were anything but pleasant as he estimated the risk he was deliberately incurring by approaching the abode of the uncanny on an unfriendly errand. Felix felt that the reward he looked for was alone commensurate for such epic heroism.

"She be to have me now," he kept assuring himself in order to keep up his courage, "an' me takin' me life in me han' for her."

Quite an ordinary display of earthy garments lay spread along the hedge that bordered the short "loanen" to the Hughes' dwelling, and among them sure enough was young John's shirt—a green one with a white sprig—the very one Felix remembered he had worn the evening they met at Mrs. Hannigan's.

Two fields away he could discern John's broad back bent over his spade. What if when he touched the cloth his guilty hand were frozen to it, or it might even be his feet paralysed!

As he opened his knife his hands trembled as those of a murderer may. A slash. The desperate deed was accomplished.

A furious barking sent him gliding back under the hedge with his booty, in such a manner as to assure him that his powers of locomotion were at least normal.

Then the cottage door opened. From his ambush Felix watched to see what would happen, with an awed curiosity he could not resist.

Forth came John's sister Ellen, basket in hand, to fetch the clothes, meanwhile chiding the still excited dog for his unnecessary alarm. Calmly she commenced her duty. Soon, however, came the shock, clearly perceived by Felix, at the moment when she arrived opposite the green shirt.

Ellen lifted it, fell into a deep study for some moments, turned it over and over, then shook it as if the mutilated portion would fall into place again before her bewildered

eyes. He saw her hasten across the field to exhibit the mangled remains to their astonished owner, and wondered how John would account for the damage.

"He'll likely think the calves chawed it," said Felix to himself; and with this comforting assurance he hurried down the hill in the gathering dusk.

In a short time the green wisp was proudly displayed in Kate's kitchen, and after some discussion as to procedure the ordeal by fire commenced.

Kate carrying the lantern and Felix furnished with the local newspaper made into a wisp and fired at one end, formed the stealthy procession to administer the rite, while the staid grey cat sat on the doorstep a philosophic spectator of the strange going-on of mortals.

"Will I lose her, Kate, to give her room to lep?" enquired Felix.

"Mebbe ye'd betther."

After freeing Strawberry's head, Felix held the cloth in position before the creature's nose, and at once applied the burning torch. It merely smouldered. Then there came a scream of pain as the paper burned down to his sensitive hand and fell into the hay.

A flame shot up. Not the cow alone but a general "lepping" followed the rite. Penic ensued. With the common instinct of self-preservation, Kate, Felix and the invalid sought the door. Then the flame died down leaving all in darkness, for Kate had dropped the lantern in her flight.

Strawberry won the race, leaving Felix stretched across the exit. His moans were heartrendering.

"She has the feet tramped clane off me," he lamented. "I can't raise meself at all, at all. Talk of sickness," he said bitterly. "Why she has the strength of a bull."

Kate rendered what assistance she could, although herself suffering from shock. She succeeded in getting Felix on his feet, or rather on one foot; and with a hand on her shoulder he contrived to limp across the yard towards the house.

Fate would have it as it so happened, that "young John" should choose that momentous evening to call upon the widow. Finding the kitchen deserted he hastened into the yard from which came ominous noises. As he approached the back door the scared cat dashed between his legs. The next thing he was conscious of was the sick cow careering round the yard. Finally he recognised to his amazement his rival Felix, in the condition of an old soldier returning from the wars.

"Under heavens what sort o' play actin' are yez carrying on," he inquired bewildered.

"We were dochterin' the cow, an' she broke loose and nearly kilt both of us," at last Felix managed to get out.

John laughed loudly. "Here give us the lantern till I tie her up again," and to the cow he entreated, "Chay, crather, chay."

Felix did not fail to notice even in his agony that the tormented beast became docile again at John's entreaty.

"The lantern's lying some place in the byre," said Kate.

John groped for it, found it and lit it. "There's a tarrible smell o' burnin'," he said to himself as he did so, "and by all the powers if here's not the lost tail o' my shirt smoulderin'!" Pocketing his property he rejoined the sufferers in the kitchen.

"I should advise you to be goin' afore your feet swells too much to travel," he said to Felix. "I have a mind to sit up with the baste and physic her. I was up with Terence Dogherty, an' he gave me a sartin cure for a dwinin' cow."

Felix staggered to his feet, "I think I'd better be pushin' on," he said. "Mebbe I'll come over the morra night an' see how the poor craythur is." He shot an appealing glance at Kate. But the widow sat motionless and silent.

"If yer wise ye'll not walk this len'th for a lock o' nights," said John. "Will I lave ye home?"

"Not at all, man, thank ye," said Felix quickly, hobbling towards the door, by means of outstretched hands clutching anything at hand. "Mebbe you could lend me the loan of a stick, Mrs. Hannigan? I'm much obliged. Good night."

John sat down opposite Kate and laughed uproariously.

"It's the quare sort o' feelin's ye have to laugh at trouble," she reproached him.

"People mostly get their deservance," commented John drily. "I say, will ye give over yer foolishness an' lave the baste to me?"

"If you could put the cure on her I'd be thankful to ye," said Kate coldly.

"If I bring her roun' will ye marry me afore Holleve?"

"Lord preserve us!"

"Will ye, or will ye not?"

"Mebbe—"

"This is the last time ivver I'll ax ye; will ye?"

"I will (God help me)."

TO "STEWART."

Nobody knew the friends we were
(Only he and I),
Vagrants in a world of our own
Girt by freemasonry.

And nobody knew the anguish
(Only God and I)
That digged the shallow garden grave
For the dainty limbs to lie.

But I knew either must suffer
Should jealous death pass by
(As he did), and oh! I rejoice
That broken heart was I.

* * *

Friend, companion, protector, lover,
I cannot say adieu;
If merit win the after bliss,
Who worthier than you?

A SINGING MINISTER.

Oh Dickey-boy, darling!"

The wail came from the heart of Miss Agnes.

But the tiny yellow bundle gave no heed.

Was that shapeless feathery fluff actually the erstwhile slim, spruce dandy, that was wont to perform such an elaborate toilet daily, before the gaze of one, if not two, pairs of doting old eyes?

"Now, Agnes, you must go to bed. I'm sure it's twenty years since you were up at eleven o'clock before. You'll be a deal the worse for it!"

Miss Jane folded up the scarlet muffler that she eternally knitted for a "deep sea fisherman." The click of her spectacles in the case that hung from her belt was an ultimatum.

"But how could I leave Dickey, Jane?"

No problem ever proved unsolvable to Miss Jane.

"We'll take Dickey up with us, and I'll sit up awhile till he takes a turn for the better. He has been sick before, you know."

"Do you think he was ever as sick as this before, Jane?"

"Oh yes."

"Ah, but he was young then; now he is old—old for a canary—and I don't know, Jane, how I'd ever awake in the morning if there was no Dickey-boy."

Miss Agnes struggled out of her cushioned nest in the most sheltered nook of the little parlour. But the unsteady limbs, accustomed to the daring feat of climbing the cottage staircase at ten precisely, seemed even more unwilling to-night by reason of the hour's respite.

"Ley me carry Dickey, Jane."

"You that can't carry yourself!" Nevertheless Miss Jane gently pressed the handle under the twisted fingers, and the pathetic little procession started.

Once upstairs, Miss Agnes was speedily freed from her maze of wrappings, and almost lifted into the high feather bed.

"Now I'll run down and put out the lights," said Miss Jane.

But her cheerfulness passed with the closing of the door. "Oh Dickey-boy, darling!" she said, "how I have dreaded this for her! If it were God's will I have sometimes wished that she might go before you." And a tear tumbled off the Roman nose and glistened on the jet-embroidered bosom.

"Now what's the good of going to bed and lying with your eyes wide open?" she exclaimed on her return.

"You'll tell me if Dickey's worse, Jane?"

"I will. Turn over to the wall." Miss Agnes turned.

The old "Grandfather" in the lobby, that had always made a point of ticking the louder as death drew nigh added ten more minutes to the night.

"How is he now, Jane?"

Miss Jane leant over. "Dear, he has fallen off the perch."

* * * * * *

Reverently she lifted the little ball and laid it in the outstretched, trembling hands. If kisses could restore, then indeed that limp little object had been a blithe singing-bird again. But Dickey-boy's divine mission was ended.

By and by they could speak of their loss.

"Jane, do you know, I have read sometimes that . . . birds are thought to have souls."

"Perhaps, indeed," said orthodox Miss Jane.

"If any bird goes to heaven, my Dickey-boy will."

"Dear, don't say anything like that to Mr. Pollocks when he comes to tea to-morrow."

"Oh, no. But isn't it very strange that Dickey-boy did more to keep my faith in God through these last terrible years than all Mr. Pollocks' prayers. But of course he helped me too. For he has been more than kind to me. And as for you, Jane"—

Miss Jane turned swiftly to adjust the curtains.

"I often wondered Jane, if even Israfel himself could surpass my Dickey-boy."

"I never heard him, dear," said Miss Jane.

"A tremulous smile stole over Miss Agnes' gentle face. "Oh, Jane! surely you remember he is the seraph who leads the praise in heaven—the sweetest singer there—

'Israfel whose heartstrings are a lute,' "

quoted Miss Agnes with rapture. " But then, Jane, you never would read poetry," she added.

Miss Agnes was not used to talk thus. Her cheeks grew pink. Her eyes were stars. The wondering sister seemed to see the lost beauty of forty years ago spring back again, and struggle for possession of the poor drawn face.

"Agnes, dear, don't talk any more now. Turn over and sleep. Shall I put Dickey back in his cage lest Tabby gets in?"

" Oh, no ; let me keep him this last night."

* * * * * *

Strange unquieting thoughts held Miss Jane's eyes open far on in the still dark hours.

With a start she awoke to a sudden burst of song. The April sun danced along the gilded bars of an empty cage. " I do hope she hasn't heard that foolish thrush," she said, as she tip-toed over to the other bed. But Agnes did not hear. She was listening to Israfel.

O JESUS, BROTHER.

O Jesus, Brother, walk with us
Along life's lonely road ;
Those feet that to the cross were nailed
Its stoniness have trod ;
We are exhausted, we have had to say
So many farewells by the way !

O Jesus, Brother, weep with us
In our Gethsemane,
Whose tears flowed for the sisters two
Forlorn at Bethany.
Stand close beside us at the graveside deep,
And tell us that they only sleep !

O Jesus, Brother, hold our hand
In that tremendous hour
When soul and mortal body part—
(It may be very near),
And lead us to the dearly loved of yore
Only to find they love us more.

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